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->From the Editor’s Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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What a difference a week makes! Last week I was in a foul mood; and we got socked with about 8 inches of snow. This week was almost spring-like; and my mood is comparatively better. I’m ready for winter to be over even though we’ve had a relatively uneventful season. Other than some bouts of real cold weather, snowfall has been calm around here.

It appears that Microsoft is not going to come out of this antitrust case on a positive note. Unless Microsoft can offer a reasonable and acceptable settlement, I see some troubled days ahead for the software giant.

I wonder if PC owners are ready for Round 2 of potential Y2K problems that could occur next week, on February 29? There isn’t much public notice regarding these additional issues. I hope everyone comes through the Leap Day unscathed!

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
jmirando@portone.com

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. I know that this doesn’t happen often, but I really don’t know if I’ve got anything to say this time around. It’s been one of those weeks again. I don’t know. Things just don’t seem to get any easier, do they?

In a nutshell, all my Atari computers are running like tops... well, the ones that I use are, anyway. MagiC on the TT, NeoDesk/Geneva on the Stacy, and stock TOS on both when I’m in a reminiscent mood gives me all the functionality I need while staying well within the memory and hard drive constraints. That alone makes it a far cry from today’s "mature" operating systems.

That term always makes me laugh. Mature operating system. Let me see... starts with a ’tabula rasa’, needs to be hand fed, spends most of its time making annoying noises and dribbling all over whatever happens to be handy, can’t clean itself up, and consumes much more of your time than you ever thought it could. Hmmm... THAT doesn’t sound mature to me.

Windows has left me cold since way back when they had different versions for 286 and 386 machines. And while I haven’t seen Windows 2000 yet, I don’t expect the trend to change. Linux is a good solid step in the

right direction, but it still imposes a huge drain on the system in compute cycles, memory, and storage. The reason I prefer Linux to Windows is mainly that I've found Linux to be rock solid, while Windows on my laptop needs to be rebooted daily or it becomes unstable. I haven't rebooted my laptop under Linux because I've had to since I installed it.

The only real problem I have with Linux is documentation. Most documentation assumes that you have a good working knowledge of Linux and, therefore, leaves some pretty important things out. But I've found that despite the initial imposition, this "fault" actually helps you to learn how and why things work within the operating system. That's another one of the things I dislike about Windows: The fact that it insulates you from so much of what's going on that it might as well be happening because of magic.

Huh. I guess I really DID have something to say after all. <grin>

Well, let's get to the news, hints, tips, and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

Martin Tarenskeen asks:

"I am using STinG 1.20 without much problems.
Can anyone tell me why I should update to version 1.22?"

Joe Villarreal tells Martin:

"On my TT, Sting 1.22 is quite a bit faster than 1.20 was. It's not uncommon to get downloads of 10,000+ bps with Magic6 using Dan Ackerman's overlay 1.3101 optimized for the TT, Falcon. This is early in the morning when most people are still asleep. Evening speeds vary somewhat from an average of 4500 up to around 10,000; still very acceptable speeds.

Don't know about other Atari computers though."

Alyre Chiasson asks about using GEMulator:

"I have installed the Gemulator 2000 software and also have the internal rom card. Try as I might I cannot get Calligrapher Gold to properly install the 5th disk so it doesn't always ask for disk 1. Even when disk 1 is in the drive Gemulator doesn't recognize it. I though that maybe setting up a virtual disk would be a solution? However, perhaps I don't understand what a virtual disk really is? I though it was space reserved in memory. So how can Gemulator set up a default 80 MEG C drive on a 32 MEG machine (swap file?). Even so, how do I get my current Atari files on to this virtual disk? Once the virtual drive is set up I no longer have access to my Windows C partition to copy the files to the virtual disk. There is obviously something I am missing here.

Any clarification and solutions appreciated."

John Kolak tells Alyre:

"I don't have experience with your particular situation, but I don't see the need for a virtual drive. My Gemulator resides quite nicely on my 4GB PC drive. It is a little inconvenient to have all those PC folders

in my GEM window though. Maybe an "Atari" folder that would show up alphabetically at the top of the window would be more convenient."

Djordje Vukovic adds:

"It seems to me that one of (rare) drawbacks of Gemulator is its inability to map folders into "drives" the way PaCifiST and TOSBox do. In my opinion that is a very handy way of keeping Atari files out of the way when using Windows, and vice-versa.

I have mapped folders into Atari "drives" from Windows itself (SUBST...), but although Gemulator sees such "drives", I did not succeed to boot the emulated computer from them. So all the Atari startup stuff (MAGIC_PC.OS, AUTO folder, DESKICON.RSC, NEWDESK.INF, *.ACC, etc.) is in the root of the "real" C-drive,, which is not very handy, indeed. Any suggestions how to do it better?"

Kenneth Medin adds his thoughts:

"Perhaps the drive has problems reading the disk? Is the program copy protected? If so, maybe the the pc can’t handle it?

Try to make a copy of the disk. If that works, try to install with the copy. If it’s really copy protected you may have to find a cracked copy instead.

A virtual drive is a huge file in the Windows environment that Gemulator treats like an Atari hard disk.

Atari TOS does not use swap files internally. You simply get a virtual (not physical!) hard disk on partition C in the desktop. You may have to install the drive icon in the normal Atari manner too.

Gemulator can be run in two modes:

1. Using the normal Win hard disks, floppys, cdroms etc. directly. This means your Atari files will mix with Windows files. This mode is less compatible with how a genuine Atari works. You may have problems sorting the AUTO folder etc. I have also had problems with Atari programs (written by myself) that tries to read a file up to "end of file" leading to program errors.

2. Using virtual drives. These behaves exactly like normal Atari drives. Also the floppy may accept more strange formats? I had to use this mode to get the STinG network run with Gemulator. In this mode all Atari files are kept separated from Windows ones.

In 1. you can copy and delete files at will all over the pc hard disk. But you should avoid copying pc files with long filenames.

In 2. You have a totally separate Atari inside the pc. Only the floppy is shared. NOTE that this can lead to data corruption! Windows does not recognize changes written to the floppy by Gemulator. Always remember to take the floppy disk out and reinsert it so Windows thinks it has been exchanged. In this mode you install programs just like on a real Atari by using floppys. To copy a file to/from the Windows environment you also have to use a floppy. If you have a real Atari (with hard disk) too, you can of course also run a terminal program on both computers and copy files using zmodem and a null modem cable. Even possible to share drives with tcp/ip and BNET or by using ftp, but needs a bit more

configurations to work."

Aleksandar Sarovic asks about saving an old file from the ST:

"I wrote a long text 8 years ago on Atari 1024ST and saved text on diskettes together with a text program called SIGNUM. Now I would like to open the text on PC but cannot. Tried to use emulator and got folders but cannot open it because PC does not recognize SIGNUM with SDO extension. Maybe the best choice would be to find Atari computer, open the file and convert it to any PC recognized file or send the text to my address by e-mail. Is there anybody in Toronto area willing to help me? Any suggestion will be welcome."

Pera Putnik tells Aleksandar:

"If you use e-mail, it is not important where the person is who will do the conversion."

Aleksandar tells Pera:

"It is extremely important, because the person who may do the conversion does not have my diskettes and I cannot send him files via e-mail because my machine could not pick the files up..."

Pera replies:

"If you use Gemulator you should activate Atari disk mode. Then you must be able to copy files from ST floppies to PC hard disk. Btw. Gemulator is now completely free."

Kenneth Medin jumps in and tells Aleksandar:

"You should copy the files from floppy to hard disk, not open them by double clicking!

First keep the floppy write protected (open the tab).

Insert floppy in pc

Double click on "My computer" icon. This opens a window with your available disk drives.

Double click on the floppy and hard disk icons.

Select the files on the floppy you want to copy. Drag (with mouse button down) the files from floppy window to hard disk window.

Even more simple would be to simply start your email program and attach the files right from floppy."

Martin-Eric Racine asks about taking his Stacy apart:

"I’m in the process of disassembling my Stacy to install a bigger hard-disk, but ran into one stumbling block: the display’s wire harness. It is too short to easily move the top assembly apart, or even to access the connectors. What’s the trick?"

Jos Vliestra tells Martin-Eric:

"I did it once 2 years ago, you have to dismantle the LCD screen and then

dismantle the spring (very carefully). Then you have to help the white wires very gently through the hole in the housing."

Kevin Dermott adds:

"Many people have killed STacys trying to upgrade them. I managed to put a large hard drive and HD floppy controller in mine. One tip: The internal SCSI host only supports up to Gig and is fussy as to what drive it has. Good luck."

Brian Hutchinson asks about upgrading his Falcon:

"I'd like to upgrade my Falcon but there are so many options I don't know about:

Nemesis
Eclipse
CenTurbo II
Afterburner 040
PPC

The list goes on!

I want to speed up my system, get better video (true color and 1024x768 at least) and run various OSs like Linux, NetBSD, Minix, Mint etc. as well as TOS.

I currently have a Falcon 030 with one of the clock mods, two external SCSI drives and a external SCSI CD ROM. I still use the stock internal 80M IDE, although I would like to get the Wizztronics adapter and add a 3.5" IDE I have laying around.

Could someone knowledgeable about these upgrades tell me about the pros and cons about computability etc.? I'd like to hear from people who have some of these upgrades to hear about their experience.

The monitor I am using is a Mag 17". I think I might have a problem here too. I don't think this monitor will do ST low will it? Monitor help is appreciated too!"

Phil Walding tells Brian:

"I ran a Mag 17" (MXF, I think) on my Mega4STe for a while and while it had a great range, no - it wouldn't do ST low. I was running it through a Crazy Dots II and it did do a great 800 x 600 at around 100Hz."

Rich Elwell adds:

"My website has some info about the Afterburner040. It includes my fitting experience and info about software compatibility.

http://www.rjelwell.demon.co.uk/ab040.html"

Well folks, that's it for this time around. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what people are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Songbird News! PSX 2 Orders Jam Web! X-Box! EA Buys Dreamworks Interactive! Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2! 'Fear Effect'! And more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

PlayStation Orders Jam Web Site

The samurai in splendid armor and the cannons bursting with smoke look so smooth and vivid on the TV monitor screen they could pass for scenes from an animation film.

''Kessen," or ''Battle," is one of the new games for Sony's upgraded PlayStation video-game machine that fans are getting a chance to try out for the first time this weekend.

The PlayStation 2 - which will go on sale in Japan on March 4 and is planned for the United States in time for Christmas - boasts a startling attention to detail in its imagery.

But while the fight scenes are dazzling on screen, many eyes are focused on the battle off screen among Sony and video game console rivals Sega Enterprises, which makes Dreamcast, and Nintendo, maker of N64 and the portable Game Boy.

Sega's Dreamcast wowed users with its amazing graphics and its promise of Internet connectability for online gaming when it was introduced last year. Now it's Sony's turn.

Sony Computer Entertainment, Sony's video game unit, plans to sell a million of the $360 PlayStation 2 consoles here in its first round of shipments next month.

''It's a fantastic number, no matter how you look at it," said Hitoshi Kuriyama, an analyst with Merrill Lynch in Tokyo.

Reflecting widespread opinion, Kuriyama forecasts Sony will need a year to start turning a profit on the PlayStation 2, losing $180 for every machine sold and recording a loss of $180 million in March alone.

It's a cost Sony apparently sees as worthwhile if it hopes to keep its edge in the intensifying war against its Japanese rivals.

Like the Dreamcast, the PlayStation2 will contain a 128-bit processor, up

from a 32-bit processor in the original system which was launched in 1994. Video-game analysts say the machine will be as powerful as a supercomputer.

Dreamcast is cheaper than the PlayStation 2, retailing at $199. The Dreamcast costs $180 in Japan.

Sony accounts for about 60 percent of the U.S. game-machine market, while Nintendo - which is expected to launch its own new machine later this year - holds more than 30 percent and Sega less than 5 percent. Sony also dominates the Japanese market at about 60 percent, with Sega trailing behind at 35 percent.

Sony hopes to cash in on the fans of the original PlayStation, which total some 70 million worldwide. Except for about 16 titles, all of the more than 2,600 games for the current PlayStation can be played on the new PlayStation.

So far, the new console is generating plenty of excitement. The Internet home page for advance orders, which opened Friday, shut down for a short time after getting overwhelmed with as many as 500,000 hits a minute, said Sony Computer Entertainment president Ken Kutaragi.

The PlayStation 2 is considered a good deal because it is also a DVD player, which starts at about $630 in Japan - it can also play CDs. Prices for most of the games are still undecided but are expected to be about $52.

Whether Sony can maintain momentum in sales in the coming months will be critical to its success, said Masahiro Ono, an analyst with Warburg Dillon Read.

‘‘Will the spectacular graphics be enough to make the machine a hit with game fans? They don’t buy machines on graphic quality alone," Ono said.

EA Buys Dreamworks Interactive

Electronic Arts, preparing a big push into PlayStation II, will pay an undisclosed amount for the creator of Lost World: Jurassic Park.

Electronic Arts, an interactive entertainment software company, said Thursday it will buy multimedia developer DreamWorks Interactive, LLC.

Financial terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Under the agreement, DreamWorks Interactive (DWI), which has been working with Electronic Arts over the past two years, will become a wholly owned subsidiary of the company.

Dreamworks Interactive was formed as a joint venture in March 1995 by Microsoft and DreamWorks SKG, under the creative leadership of Steven Spielberg. The company is known for PlayStation titles as Lost World: Jurassic Park. Electronic Arts will bring world-class production processes, and a strong global distribution and marketing infrastructure to DreamWorks, the companies said.

Electronic Arts is pushing hard to have products ready for Sony’s

PlayStation 2 console, and is also working on an America Online game service, scheduled to debut this summer.

Gates Likely To Discuss X-Box At Game Developer Confab

Microsoft Corp. Chairman Bill Gates is expected to disclose details of the company's much-rumored video game console in development, code-named the X-Box, when he speaks at a game developers conference next month, video gaming industry analysts said.

Earlier on Tuesday, the sponsors of the Game Developers Conference (GDC) issued a press release, saying that Gates, who is now also Microsoft's chief software architect, will make opening remarks at the conference on Friday, March 10.

''He is just coming to address the gaming development community in his new role as chief (software) architect," said a spokeswoman for Microsoft. ''He has opportunities to do those kind of things now." She said she did not know if Gates would discuss the rumored X-Box. ''All we know is what's in the release."

''The presentation is expected to focus on Microsoft's ongoing commitment to the entertainment market," said the Miller Freeman Game Group, which is organizing the conference, in a statement.

But analysts and video gaming experts said that Gates will likely take this opportunity to make public the first details about the Redmond, Wash.-based software behemoth's foray into the video game console industry.

''Clearly, he is going to get up there and talk about X-Box," said Tony Russo, editor-in-chief of Next Generation, a video game magazine which broke the story about the X-Box last autumn. ''A lot of people who will be at that presentation will be developers who have already had discussions with Microsoft in the past few months...This is the perfect place to reveal this technology."

The X-Box represents Microsoft's entry into the highly competitive video game console industry, which is currently dominated by Sony Corp.'s Playstation. This week in Japan, Sony launched its highly-praised Playstation2, which will hit stores in Japan on March. The Playstation2 will be launched in the United States this coming fall, just in time for the holiday shopping season.

Microsoft will also face competition from a reinvigorated Sega Enterprises Ltd. , which is regaining some of its lost market share with its new Dreamcast console and from Nintendo Co. Ltd. and its new Dolphin system, currently in development.

''With Sony, Nintendo and Sega, they have a stranglehold on the market," said Schelley Olhava, an analyst at International Data Corp. ''It would be difficult for a new company to get into the market. But Microsoft is a big company with lots of money and lots of marketing power."

Analysts said the X-Box will be primarily a video gaming console that plugs into the TV set, with Internet access, some personal computer hardware like a hard disk drive and possibly a DVD player. It is not expected until sometime in 2001.

‘‘We are all going to have different machines that do a lot of different things," said John Davison, editor-in-chief of Electronic Gaming Monthly. ‘‘The X-Box fits into that..I don’t think it’s going to be a do-everything box."

Activision Rides With Hawk Again With ’Tony Hawk’s Pro Skater 2’

Legendary pro skateboarder Tony Hawk and Activision, Inc. are in development to bring ‘‘Tony Hawk’s Pro Skater 2," to the PlayStation game console, Nintendo 64, Game Boy Color, Sega Dreamcast and PC. The highly anticipated sequel is expected to be released this fall. As with ‘‘Tony Hawk’s Pro Skater," the sequel’s PlayStation game console version is being developed by Neversoft Entertainment.

One of last year’s best-selling PlayStation game console titles, ‘‘Tony Hawk’s Pro Skater" has remained on NPD TRSTS’ top 10 list of best-selling PlayStation games since its launch in Sept. ’99. The game was the #1 best-selling PlayStation title by units sold from Oct.-Dec. ’99 and has garnered critical acclaim winning multiple awards including, ‘‘1999 Action Game of the Year" from Electronic Gaming Monthly magazine, ‘‘1999 PlayStation Game of the Year" and ‘‘1999 Best Action Game of the Year" from Game Informer magazine and ‘‘1999 PlayStation Game of the Year" from C/Net Gamecenter.com.

‘‘’Tony Hawk’s Pro Skater’ was a huge success for Activision, both in terms of sales figures and critical acclaim," stated Mitch Lasky, executive vice president, Activision Studios. ‘‘With its all-star line-up of pro skaters and superb gameplay, ’Tony Hawk’s Pro Skater’ set the benchmark for the genre. With ’Tony Hawk’s Pro Skater 2’ we will take the skateboarding category to new heights."

With the most comprehensive roster of pro skaters, an intuitive control scheme, and enhanced skating physics, ‘‘Tony Hawk’s Pro Skater 2" will deliver the most authentic and cutting-edge skateboarding experience and expands on the groundbreaking features of the original game. The sequel’s increased number of tricks and combinations -- including new grabs, grinds, inverts and lip and nollie tricks -- will challenge players to master new skills as they work their way up the skateboarding ranks.

Adding depth and replayability to the game is the most advanced Skatepark editor, allowing players to build their own dream parks from scratch. Players can see exactly how their park will look in the game as they plot out a course using a variety of parts -- ramps, rails, obstacles and quarterpipes -- in the real-time 3D editor. Once a level is laid out it can be saved to a Memory Card and shared with friends. Additionally, a total character customization feature allows gamers to modify the pro skaters’ clothing, physical appearance and trick sets, or build an entirely new character from scratch.

Players can ollie and grind in a variety of new international real world settings, including skate parks and locations in New York, Marseille, and Rio de Janeiro. Each environment is littered with secret areas, short cuts, ramps and interactive objects allowing players to trick off of just about everything in sight.

Offering several modes of play, ‘‘Tony Hawk’s Pro Skater 2’s" two-player split-screen trick attack mode give skaters the ability to interact with other players, allowing them to compete on ramps and in skateparks for style points, race between various obstacles on the tracks or play in graffiti mode in which players ‘‘tag" different obstacles in the environment by performing tricks off of them. The game also features a variety of multiplayer modes including an all new multiplayer competition mode in which players can compete with and against up to seven opponents in a judged skate competition, new street, vert and best trick modes and an enhanced version of H-O-R-S-E. Additionally, the game also features new mini-games that players can unlock as they advance through the improved career mode as well as a replay mode where players can view the highlights of each run.

3DO Ships Army Men Sarge’s Heroes for PlayStation

The 3DO Company Wednesday announced the release of the Army Men -- Sarge’s Heroes game for the PlayStation game console, the sixth game in the remarkably successful Army Men brand.

The Army Men -- Sarge’s Heroes game blasted to the top of the charts when it appeared last September on the Nintendofi 64 platform, debuting at #2 on the NPD charts in its first month of retail sales, and remaining in the Top 10 Best-Selling Nintendo Titles for five months. The game remains in the Top 10 Video Game Rentals as reported by VIDTRAC.

‘‘We’re thrilled to be bringing the most successful Army Men game so far to the huge audience of PlayStation game players," said Trip Hawkins, chairman and CEO of The 3DO Company. ‘‘Sarge is one of the most dynamic characters ever created for a video game, and he resonates with gamers and mass consumers alike. The game appeals to adults who remember playing with the plastic toys and to kids who just like cool game play."

The Army Men -- Sarge’s Heroes game introduces a cast of nine different characters with loads of personality in a rollicking adventure as Sarge sets out to rescue the elite Bravo Company Commandos, foil the Tan Army in its quest for diabolical weapons, and even take time out for a little romance. Over 25 minutes of engaging, high-resolution, Hollywood-style cinematics bring the characters to life and draw players into the story. Renowned voice actor Jim Cummings, best known as the voice of ‘‘Tigger," provides Sarge’s trademark drawl.

In his quest for world domination, the evil General Plastro sends his Tan soldiers through mysterious portals to bring back horrible weapons of mass destruction like the giant Magnifying Glass. Players lead Sarge though 15 missions of up to five separate objectives each. Eight levels in the ‘‘Plastic World" feature everything from treacherous mountain terrain to arctic wastelands, forests, towns, and heavily defended enemy army bases. In ‘‘Our World" the player will experience warfare like never before as Sarge fights through seven levels set in a suburban home: the backyard garden -- complete with giant insects and flowers -- the living room, the kitchen, and the bathroom. Six multiplayer missions extend the fun and Family Mode allows players of all skill levels to enjoy the game together.

Eidos Interactive Announces Fear Effect for the

PlayStation Game Console Is Now Shipping

Fear Effect is a suspense action/adventure game unlike any of its predecessors. Delivering thrills, excitement and terror in equal measures, Fear Effect is designed to provoke emotional responses by fully immersing you into imaginary, alive worlds.

When Wee Ming Lam, the daughter of a powerful Chinese businessman, disappears into the hedonistic and dangerous city of Shan Xi under mysterious circumstances, your team of mercenaries infiltrate the city and attempt to reach her first, hoping to leverage her safety for a sizable pile of cash.

They will have to search, and fire-fight through the archaic chaos of an alternate reality China and its inhabitants while constantly being challenged by the henchmen of the girl’s father who have no intention of letting her get away.

Gamers control these mercenaries through richly detailed, high resolution, fully animated backgrounds dubbed ‘‘Motion FX technology." The game also features seamless transitions between narrative and gameplay moments to create a true interactive movie experience. In addition to massive amounts of action, the gamer will have to solve numerable puzzles, and explore six distinct worlds as this mature-themed story of greed and betrayal unfolds.

Rob Dyer, president of Eidos Interactive says, ‘‘Fear Effect is an incredibly unique title. It features new technology, a deep storyline, and provides gamers with an emotional experience that is rarely seen in a videogame. We feel it delivers a cinematic experience that will really make the gamer think."

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->A-ONE Gaming Online - Online Users Growl & Purr!

Songbird Now Accepts Online Payments With PayPal!

Songbird Productions now accepts online payments with PayPal. Simply visit the link below, sign up for a FREE PayPal account, and PayPal will even deposit $10 into your new account (no strings attached).

https://secure.paypal.com/refer/pal=forhan%40yahoo.com

Show your support for Songbird, and create a new PayPal account today.

Also, don’t forget, if you have the $10 Songbird coupons, you need to place an order by 3/1/00 to use them. Check out the Songbird catalog at http://songbird.atari.net.

Finally, Hyper Force balance payments and new orders are now being taken. Please send in your balance or new order ASAP. Email forhan@millcomm.com

with any questions about the new Jaguar games.

Sincerely,

Carl Forhan
Songbird Productions
http://songbird.atari.net

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Judge Compares Microsoft Control to Rockefeller's

The judge in Microsoft's antitrust trial on Tuesday likened the software giant to the sweeping Standard Oil monopoly, which was broken up by government trust busters nearly 90 years ago.

In a further blow to Microsoft Corp., District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson said he saw little difference between the Windows operating system used on most personal computers and the 19th Century oil monopoly of tycoon John D. Rockefeller.

''Mr. Rockefeller had fee simple (absolute) control over his oil," Jackson told Microsoft Corp. lawyer, John Warden. ''I don't really see a distinction."

Jackson is presiding over a case brought by the government accusing Microsoft of using a monopoly in Windows to leverage market share for other software products.

He was speaking at a hearing to help determine whether Microsoft's action violates the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890 -- a law prompted in large part by the abuses of the Standard Oil trust.

Standard Oil at one time controlled 90 percent of the U.S. oil market and was sued in 1906 by President Theodore Roosevelt's administration. A 1911 Supreme court decision split it into 30 separate companies.

On Nov. 5, at the end of an earlier phase in the trial, Jackson found that Microsoft held monopoly power and used it to harm consumers, rivals and other companies but he stopped short of any legal conclusions.

Warden had argued that Microsoft was justified in taking many of the actions the government says were illegal because it enjoys copyright protection for Windows.

Warden argued copyright protection gave Microsoft the right to limit computer makers' use of its product.

''What evidence did you give me about what is protected by copyright?"

Jackson asked.

Warden said that the company had filed its copyright registration and other papers and that the burden shifted to the government.

‘‘I don’t really understand your copyright defense," Jackson said.

Earlier, government lawyer David Boies said that Microsoft had never supported its copyright allegations with any evidence.

Boies spent his time attacking Microsoft by comparing the judge’s findings of fact to a string of Supreme Court decisions that he said proved that the world’s largest software company broke the nation’s antitrust laws.

‘‘Microsoft never tells us what is the Supreme Court case that is most like theirs." Boies said.

Boies cited Jackson’s findings of fact that said Microsoft induced and threatened Internet service providers and computer makers to shut off the two most important avenues for Netscape Navigator, a rival to Microsoft in the market for Web browsers to view the Internet.

Netscape was later acquired by America Online Inc.

‘‘Look at this conduct through the lens of Supreme Court principle," Boies told the court.

Boies cited Supreme Court cases that said that the Sherman Act prohibits conduct that has no legitimate purpose except to exclude rivals.

Later, Warden cited several Supreme Court arguments that he said supported the firm’s views. Warden had not finished his argument when the trial paused for lunch.

Judge Undercuts Microsoft Defense

The decision on whether the Microsoft Corp. violated U.S. antitrust law now rests with the trial judge, following a contentious final day of courtroom arguments and the judge’s own blunt rejection of an important legal defense for the software company.

A decision from U.S. District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson could come within weeks - absent an unlikely settlement with Justice Department lawyers. Microsoft cautioned that the verdict, widely expected to favor the government, could carry enormous impact on the nation’s booming economy for decades.

Secret negotiations continue in Chicago under a federal mediator, and the judge briefly inquired about the talks during a private meeting with lawyers following Tuesday’s final arguments.

But the sides showed in court that they remain far apart on key issues. Justice Department lawyer David Boies said it was hard to imagine how the company did not violate both sections of the federal Sherman Act. Microsoft lawyer John Warden said Boies was ‘‘entirely wrong" and insisted still that the company doesn’t hold monopoly power.

‘‘The laws should not be rewritten so that Microsoft or any other company is reluctant to compete as hard as it can," Warden said.

Warden asserted that Microsoft, for example, can’t be judged to wield monopoly power because it can’t reasonably restrict production of the world’s computer operating system software. He compared it to the ability of General Motors Corp. to reduce production of Cadillacs but not by itself dramatically cut production of all other automobiles as well.

‘‘General Motors has competitors," the judge responded, suggesting that Microsoft doesn’t.

Jackson found in a harshly-worded interim decision last year that Microsoft was an abusive monopoly whose actions hurt consumers, generally accepting all the government’s allegations. But he delayed the final phase of his verdict, partly to encourage settlement talks, when he is expected to identify which antitrust laws Microsoft violated.

In this last round of arguments, Jackson challenged Microsoft’s claim - then hours later appeared to reject it entirely - that its federal copyrights allow wide latitude in the way it designs and distributes software even when it appears to clash with antitrust prohibitions.

‘‘Copyright does not protect the conduct with which your client is charged," the judge bluntly told Warden.

At issue is Microsoft’s decision in 1995 to bundle its Internet browser software into its flagship Windows operating system, which runs most of the world’s personal computers. The government alleges Microsoft illegally ‘‘tied" separate products to crush consumer demand for rival browsing software from the former Netscape Communications Corp.

Microsoft’s copyright defense was critical because it potentially protected its demands that computer makers that sell Windows on their machines also include Microsoft’s own Internet software, regardless of consumer preference.

Microsoft’s top lawyer, William Neukom, said outside court he did not believe Jackson was skeptical of the copyright defense. The judge’s repeated questioning indicated he was ‘‘genuinely curious to understand it better," Neukom said.

Boies cited dozens of excerpts from the judge’s favorable decision last year, arguing that Microsoft spent hundreds of millions of dollars to develop its Internet software then gave it away free.

Boies urged the judge to rule that the company violated both sections of the Sherman Act, which prohibits a monopolist under some circumstances from tying separate products and generally prohibits monopolies from wielding their power to protect their influence.

Windows ’Me’ Next Up for Microsoft

Now that Microsoft Corp. has finally shipped Windows 2000, its most ambitious product yet, the software giant is turning its attention to a face-lift of its ubiquitous consumer operating system.

Because Windows 2000, launched by Chairman Bill Gates last week, targets businesses, Microsoft says average users should wait for the updated version of Windows 98, officially dubbed Windows Millennium Edition, or Windows Me.

That software will not make the kind of dramatic leaps in performance and stability that Windows 2000 boasts, but it will sport a slightly newer look and built-in tools for gadgets such as digital cameras and digital music players.

‘‘We are targeting this as a more incremental step forward in some long-term goals," Shawn Sanford, group manager for Windows Millennium Edition, said in an interview on last Friday.

While Windows 2000 has won high marks from reviewers for its rock-solid stability and watertight security, it is not designed to work with many entertainment products like fancy fast-action video games.

With 3-D icons, less-cramped menus and smoothly opening windows, Me may look much like 2000, but is based on different programming technology.

Me is rooted in the DOS code that Windows 95 and 98 are based on, while 2000 is built from the more advanced and crash-resistant NT code.

‘‘It’s largely cosmetic. They’ve taken a lot of visual aspects of Windows 2000 and blended them into Windows Me," said Andy Rathbone, who is contracted to write a ‘‘Windows Me for Dummies" guide to the software.

Sanford promised numerous tweaks that would make the update less likely to crash. A new feature, ‘‘system restore," will be a safety hatch for when a software installation goes horribly wrong, or if settings or programs are accidentally altered or deleted.

‘‘You can actually roll your machine back to the way it was the day before, the week before, or before you last installed software. There is no timely process of recreating the way it was before," Sanford said.

‘‘We are looking at really simplifying the experience around movies, around pictures, music and games," Sanford said.

Other bonuses include easier set-up for home networking, an improved version of the Explorer Web browser, and support for "universal plug and play" technology that will link refrigerators, TVs, and other appliances together, Sanford said.

Microsoft poured more than $1 billion to create Windows 2000, and is spending another $500 million over the next two years to try to make it the platform of choice for businesses as they rush to cash in on the e-commerce boom.

Windows Me, however, is expected to make much less of a splash, Rathbone said.

‘‘They pretty much have the consumer market wrapped up, there’s really nothing else people can use on their desktops," Rathbone said. ‘‘The business level is what they haven’t captured, so they are making a big push on Windows 2000."

More than 90 percent of consumer PCs run Windows 95 or 98, but Windows NT has captured only about one-third of the market for servers, the powerful

machines that underpin networks and the Internet.

It faces stiff competition from Microsoft arch-rival Sun Microsystems Inc., Novell Inc., and several start-up firms pitching the free Linux operating system.

The worldwide roll-out of Windows 2000 prompted two Wall Street investment firms to issue bullish outlooks on Microsoft, with Lehman Bros. reiterating its ‘‘buy" rating and Credit Suisee First Boston repeated its ‘‘strong buy" tag.

3Com Corp. Unveils Color Palms

3Com Corp. is adding a little color to the popular Palm personal organizer.

The new Palm IIIc model, unveiled Tuesday and retailing at $449, is the company’s first color-screen version and comes at a time when it is trying to keep competitors such as Handspring Inc., Casio and Compaq from gaining market share in the handheld devices market. Some of those companies already have color-screen models.

The new Palm model will include software for viewing pictures and Web pages in color. Because the color screen drains batteries faster, the IIIc has a rechargeable battery pack built in.

Palm also introduced a mid-price model, the $249 Palm IIIxe, as well as a portable keyboard for its entire line.

3Com next week is expected to spin off Palm Inc. into an independent company in an initial public offering. Palm hopes initially to raise $570 million by selling 23 million shares to investors and 15 million shares to corporate partners America Online Inc., Motorola Inc. and Nokia Corp.

Quartz: The Palm-killing PDA?

It’s a cell phone that streams multimedia, browses the Web, sports a Palm-like interface -- and might just be given away by telecos.

Is the stand-alone PDA dead?

With the unveiling of the Symbian consortium’s Quartz devices at the CeBIT computer show in Germany this week, analysts say current handheld devices, such as the Palm, face competition from a new breed of integrated handheld device that packs telephony, streaming multimedia, Web browsing and Palm-like computing.

By Christmas, European cell-phone subscribers should be able to upgrade this year’s digital handset to a Quartz "communicator," giving them the full functionality of a Palm organizer or handheld Windows CE device at no extra cost.

In the United States, meanwhile, Symbian CEO Colly Myers confirmed the consortium has held discussions with , and these are likely to continue. AOL has touted an "AOL Anywhere" access device but has yet to publicly

decide on a platform.

Symbian’s color devices, featuring a 320-by-240-pixel "quarter VGA" screen, provide enough horsepower for multimedia playback, supporting MPEG, MP3 and video conferencing. The devices double as a conventional cell phone by plugging in a headset -- or wirelessly using a Bluetooth headset or ear clip. Bluetooth will even allow the device to be left in a jacket pocket or briefcase, with voice activation triggering the call.

"If I was Palm I would be beside myself with panic," said IDC analyst Jill House. "In Europe, where there’s a good wireless infrastructure, the competition is pretty much over."

Symbian -- whose shareholders include handset giants Matsushita (Panasonic), has modeled the Quartz interface closely on Palm’s operating system. The reference design, or DFRD, calls for an upright tablet-style device with two or four buttons. Like the Palm, there is no built-in file manager, and a simple, task-based applications screen.

But the deathblow for today’s PDA manufacturers may be the price: zero.

After demonstrating an interactive route-finding application on Quartz at the Symbian Developer Conference last week, Ericsson executives indicated that the device would be sold much like today’s cellular handsets: through subsidized contracts with carriers. Today’s phones sell for upward of $350 retail, but the vast majority of subscribers instead pay a modest monthly rental.

And the low cost is expected to see "smart" phones and communicators take a slice of the cellular market predicted for 2003.

"Even if only a tenth of devices are data-enabled units, that is a hundred million WIDs -- (today) Palm’s doing quite well at 2 to 3 million," said Symbian’s Myers.

Java poweredSpeaking to ZDNet News, Myers denied similarities between the Palm and Quartz platforms. "The devil’s in the detail: On the face of it, Palm-size PCs look like Palm, too, but they aren’t being successful," he said. "Unlike Palm, we’re running Java, and our true voice integration makes it quite a different product."

But there’s more to the PDA than just the device, according to IDC’s House.

In the United States, where roaming between networks is expensive and coverage is patchy, and where no single air-interface standard rules, House said PDAs such as the Palm have a fighting chance.

"The U.S. is going to be harder for Symbian. The infrastructure just isn’t set up to handle that kind of solution," she said. "It needs a buy-in from the carriers, and, unlike Europe, carriers are much more interested in having their own play."

In addition, users who’ve recently bought into Palm may be loyal while the devices remain useful: "People won’t ditch what they already own," she said.

PocketPC’s new user interface and application software, code-named Rapier, is an easier-to-use successor to Microsoft’s Palm-size PC.

Just in time for tax season, consumers will be able to use Excel on their PocketPCs.

Microsoft Corp. is preparing an April launch of, and a new suite of applications for, its PocketPC. The Redmond, Wash., software maker hopes that consumers will find PocketPC’s user interface and application software, code-named Rapier, an easier-to-use successor to its Palm-size PC.

PocketPCs will offer new hardware designs from a number of vendors, along with the new user interface and applications such as Pocket Explorer and Pocket Word. The device’s underlying operating system will be Microsoft’s Windows CE.

New PocketPC devices will be divided into two categories, or classes.

PocketPC Standard devices, sources said, will offer basic personal information management capabilities with the addition of Microsoft’s Pocket Explorer and Microsoft Mobile channels, which allow users to automatically download Web sites, taking them on the road. PocketPC Standard devices, with monochrome screens, will start at about $199, sources said.

PocketPC Standard devices are meant to be "a good personal organizer with Microsoft channels and good connectivity," said a source.

A feature-rich deviceMicrosoft and its hardware partners will also offer a more feature-rich PocketPC device, called PocketPC Professional.

The Professional, a name borrowed from Microsoft’s Handheld PC Professional, will include, for the first time, Microsoft’s Pocket Word and Pocket Excel applications, as well as the new Pocket Explorer, sources said.

The Word and Excel applications will likely be used to view documents and spreadsheets on the PocketPC Professional. Light editing should also be possible. It is not yet known if Microsoft has changed file formats for the applications to allow Word 2000 or Excel 2000 documents created on a PC to be read without translation on a PocketPC or vice versa.

The device will also sport improved handwriting recognition software, sources said.

In addition, PocketPC Professional will offer Microsoft’s electronic book reader application and clear type technology, which will allow users to read electronic books on the devices. Also included will be the Microsoft Media player application, which can play MP3 or Windows Media Player audio files.

PocketPC "is not perfect, but it’s a real improvement over the last generation," said a source familiar with the device.

It will have to be to woo customers away from Palm Computing’s products. PocketPC, formerly known as Palm-size PC, has been a distant second to Palm Computing’s Palm line of handheld devices since its introduction in

1998 as Palm PC.

Observers say that the lower price points of the monochrome PocketPC Standard devices are aimed squarely at the Palm and Palm licensees, such as Handspring Inc., which sells the Visor handheld.

Palm Computing this week announced its first color device, the Palm IIIc.

Microsoft officials were contacted for this story; however, they declined to comment on unannounced products.

The company has said that Hewlett-Packard Co., Casio Corp. and Compaq Computer Corp. will be among its PocketPC hardware makers.

How To Protect Computer From Hackers

Here is how to protect home computers running Microsoft Windows 95 or 98 from hackers and other snoopers on the Internet:

- Turn off the option that lets others look at your files and use your printer. To do so, click the Windows ‘‘start" button, go to ‘‘settings" and select the ‘‘control panel." In the control panel window, double-click the ‘‘network" icon. In the network window, click on the ‘‘file and print sharing" button, and uncheck the two checkboxes in the new window.

- For additional protection, get a ‘‘firewall," a program that monitors your computer’s connection to the Internet. Security expert Steve Gibson of Gibson Research Corp., in Laguna Hills, Calif., recommends ZoneAlarm, which can be downloaded for free from Zone Labs Inc. at www.zonelabs.com. Another option is Symantec Corp.’s Norton Internet Security 2000, which sells for $50 to $60. Information can be found at www.symantec.com.

You can test how secure your computer is at Gibson Research’s Web site, www.grc.com.

U.S. Sets Leap Day Computer Monitoring Plan

The United States and about a dozen countries will work together to track any automated-system failures sparked by a leap day next week that occurs only once in 400 years, the U.S. government said on Thursday.

‘‘It’s a real issue that we feel obligated to keep track of," John Koskinen, President Clinton’s chief aide for the Year 2000 technology challenge, told reporters at a $50-million Y2K monitoring station.

Koskinen said he did not expect any major system failures, largely because organizations typically checked for leap year compliance while trouble-shooting for the so-called Y2K bug.

‘‘If there are difficulties in many cases it will result in minor or modest glitches that can be remedied quickly if people catch it quickly," he said.

To keep tabs internationally, Koskinen will take part in scheduled

conference calls every eight hours over a three-day period with national Y2K coordinators on the steering committee of the World Bank-funded International Y2K Cooperation Center.

This group includes Britain, Bulgaria, Chile, Gambia, Iceland, Japan, Mexico, Morocco, the Netherlands and South Korea. Australia and New Zealand have also been invited to take part because they can give early warning shortly after Feb. 29 dawns at the International Date Line.

The $50 million information coordination center set up under White House auspices to track Y2K glitches will be operational from Feb. 28 to March 1. It will be staffed from 7 a.m. (1200 GMT) to 9 p.m. (0200 GMT) by about 75 federal workers per shift, about half as many as for the century date change, when it ran around the clock.

The greatest leap day risk is to customized software used for record keeping or billing, especially where the number of days is central to the process being carried out, such as computing interest, Koskinen said.

Unlike the Y2K issue -- where the use of only two digits to signify the year was standard practice -- the potential leap year problem results from misunderstanding the rule for when an extra day is added to the calendar.

Under the little-known three-step rule, February picks up a 29th day in years divisible by 4 except when the year is divisible by 100 -- unless the year is divisible by 400.

Thus, the Year 2000 is the first leap year of its kind since 1600. The three-step rule was crafted for the calendar introduced by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582 to better synchronize with the cycle of the seasons. The years 1700, 1800 and 1900 were not leap years.

Koskinen said previous testing found that some software programmers knew enough of the leap year rule to get to its second step. That would mean they could have coded 2000 as a normal year, in which February had 28 days, instead of the 29 required.

Koskinen, who chairs the President’s Council on Year 2000 Conversion, said he would brief the press on any glitches at 2 p.m. (1900 GMT) Feb. 29 and March 1.

At the fnail briefing, he said he would announce White House plans for the futreu of the state-of-the-art computer systems built for the rollover watch post.

Microsoft Moves to Ban Long Temps

Microsoft Corp. is limiting its temporary workers to one year of employment at a time, with 100-day intervals in between - a move that will force up to 1,500 of its long-term contract workers to find new jobs or seek permanent positions with the company.

Microsoft’s policy change, announced Friday, follows pressure from litigation and union organizers to bar use of so-called ‘‘permatemps" - temporary workers who stay in the same job for years, but without the benefits offered permanent workers.

The software giant began informing temp agencies early last week of the new policy, which goes into effect July 1.

In the past, there was no limit on the amount of time temp workers could stay at Microsoft.

Microsoft ‘‘is slowly but painfully finding out that they have to treat people who work full time, year round, as regular employees," said Mike Blain, a former contract worker at Microsoft and co-founder of the Washington Association of Technical Workers, a local labor group.

The company’s permatemp practice was challenged in two lawsuits filed by long-term temporary workers who want permanent-worker benefits. Microsoft lost one case, which won temp workers the right to buy Microsoft stock at a 15 percent discount. The second lawsuit, seeking medical and retirement benefits, is pending.

Sharon Decker, Microsoft’s director of contingent staffing, said the company made the change because of the lawsuits and negative publicity surrounding the permatemp issue.

Microsoft has been aggressively hiring temp workers into full-time positions for the past couple of years, she said - and about 35 percent of new hires have worked there as temps.

‘‘We want to make sure that our temporary assignments are true short-term assignments, and one of the criteria is that they should be less than 12 months," Decker said.

The average temporary assignment at the company is about 10 months, she said.

Decker encouraged Microsoft’s 5,500 to 6,000 temp workers - most of whom are among the 13,800 people at its headquarters in this east Seattle suburb - to apply for the 3,000 permanent positions now open. Microsoft has about 32,000 employees worldwide.

The company’s new temp-limits policy reflects those at such companies as IBM and Intel, said Rob Enderle, an analyst at information-technology advisory firm Giga Information Group.

‘‘They are bringing the corporate policy in line with the law," Enderle said. ‘‘You should never have a temporary person working for more than one year."

Faster Web Connections Prompt Higher At-Work Surfing

Much to the chagrin of many managers and supervisors, people are spending more time surfing the Internet at work than they are at home, mainly because home Web connection speeds pale in comparison to the faster connections that companies give their employees.

During January, at-work Internet users spent an average of 21 hours on the Web, more than double the amount of time at-home users were online, according to Nielsen/NetRatings, a Web measurement service from Nielsen Media Research Inc. and NetRatings Inc.

The new monthly survey found that although the active Internet audience size on the job was less than half that at home -- 30.6 million users at work versus 77 million at home -- working people went online an average of 41 times a day, dramatically higher than the average 18 sessions at home.

‘‘Web users are taking advantage of the fast Internet connections within the workplace to communicate and obtain information more efficiently," said Allen Weiner, vice president of analytical services at NetRatings.

‘‘While there may be less people overall using the Internet at work compared to the home, those who utilize the medium in the workplace are spending more time on it because of its easy accessibility and its high bandwidth," Weiner said.

In addition, NetRatings found that finance, news and electronics sites are more popular to at-home surfers, with finance sites reaching 31.1 percent more users at work than from home.

Among the leaders in the online finance category were Marketwatch.com Inc., Intuit Inc.’s Quicken.com, Time Warner Inc’s CNNfn.com and E+Trade.com.

News and information surged as a hot category among work-place Web users, reaching 35.5 percent more users at work than from home. At-work users also spent 68.3 percent more time on these sites than they do from home, according to the survey.

Traffic to Microsoft Corp.’s online news channel MSNBC nearly tripled in the workplace at 18.5 percent versus 6.8 percent for at-home usage. Online publisher Ziff-Davis Inc.-ZDNet and CNET Inc. doubled their reach in the workplace.

In the electronics category, Dell Computer Corp.’s Web site showed the largest increase in reach at 268 percent between work users and home users. Traffic to Hewlett-Packard Co. showed a 250 percent rise in the workplace, while Apple Computer Inc.’s site had a 107 percent jump.

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